

*Standard Operating Procedures*  
*Lands*

**Land Use Authorizations**

Land use permits under Section 302 of FLPMA should be used as an interim management measure for resolving unauthorized use problems prior to a final land use/status determination, and for one time use of short duration. Leases may be used as a longer term (5 to 10 years) interim management tool, particularly where future disposal or dedication to another particular land use is contemplated. The latter may allow for agricultural use on a site that may be needed in the future for communication purposes, materials source, or community expansion needs.

Cooperative agreements must be used with other Federal entities for uses which are not appropriately covered by a right-of-way or a withdrawal. Flood control and aquifer recharge areas may be most appropriately covered by cooperative agreements.

Airport leases are considered only when a definite need has been shown, supported by a specific development and management plan, and a showing of financial capability to carry out the project.

Each action would require a site-specific examination. An environmental assessment would be prepared on the proposal with special emphasis placed upon identification and mitigation of adverse effects upon resource values such as threatened, endangered, or sensitive species, cultural resources wetland/riparian zones, and flood plains.

**Unauthorized Use**

It is BLM policy to identify, abate, and prevent unauthorized use of public lands. Trespass settlement is geared to recover at least fair market value for the unauthorized use and to require rehabilitation of the land and resources damaged by the unauthorized action. Settlements may be made through administrative action or through civil or criminal court proceedings.

**Cultural Resources**

The Bureau of Land Management is required to identify, evaluate, and protect cultural resources on public lands under its jurisdiction and to ensure the Bureau-initiated or Bureau-authorized actions do not inadvertently harm or destroy non-federal cultural resources. These requirements are mandated by the Antiquities Act of 1906, the Reservoir Salvage Act of 1960 as amended by P.L. 933-191, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Executive Order 11593 (1971), the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, and Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.

*Rationale for Selection of the Proposed RMP  
Lands - Retention or Disposal*

Prior to commencement of any Bureau-initiated or authorized action, which involves surface disturbing activities, sale or transfer from Federal management, the BLM will conduct or cause to be conducted, a Class III (intensive) inventory as specified in BLM Manual Section 8111.4, supplementing previous surveys to locate, identify, and evaluate cultural resource properties in the affected areas. If properties that may be eligible for the National Register are discovered, the BLM will consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and forward the documentation to the Keeper of the National Register to obtain a determination of eligibility in accordance with 36 CFR Part 63.

Cultural resource values discovered in a proposed work area would be protected by adhering to the following methods.

1. Redesigning or relocating the project.
2. Salvaging, through scientific methods, the cultural resource values pursuant to the SHPO agreement.
3. Should the site be determined to be of significant value; eligible for or on the National Register of Historic Places; and/or the above mentioned methods are not considered adequate, the project would be abandoned.

RATIONALE FOR SELECTION OF THE PROPOSED MONUMENT RMP

Several alternatives were considered in the EIS for the Monument RMP. All of the alternatives meet the requirements of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The selection of the proposed Monument RMP is based on issue resolution, public input, environmental impacts, economic considerations, and resource production.

The rationale for selection of the proposed Monument RMP is summarized by issue below.

Lands - Retention or Disposal

A total of 54,420 acres would be evaluated through detailed studies for potential transfer out of public ownership. Of this total, 3,751 acres would be added to the Minidoka Project of the Bureau of Reclamation for development; 29,873 acres would be available only in response to Carey Act and Desert Land Act applications for agricultural development; and 20,796 acres would be available for transfer through exchange, Carey Act or Desert Land Act, public sales, or other means as appropriate.

*Rationale for Selection of the Proposed RMP  
Lands - Retention or Disposal*

**Rationale**

The proposed RMP would recognize the expressed interest in making land with potential for agriculture available for future development. The lands available specifically for agricultural development under the Carey Act or DLE, local and State government needs, or exchange would be transferred only if determined suitable as a result of the required detailed studies. Otherwise, they would be retained in Federal ownership. This would ensure continued management for uses such as livestock grazing if the lands are found unsuitable for agricultural development. The proposed RMP would limit the potential for development in areas of severe erosion hazard, particularly in the Lake Walcott area.

The transfer of land to the Bureau of Reclamation would allow for agricultural development under the Minidoka Project. This project currently has water available to allow for development. Plans under development by the Bureau of Reclamation would maintain a portion of the lands for wildlife habitat.

The proposed RMP would maintain continuity of public land for movement of livestock. Land important for livestock movement between allotments would be retained. Higher value Isolated Tracts would be retained in public ownership to maintain wildlife habitat values. Only parcels of relatively low multiple use value that are difficult to manage or present management problems would be available for transfer.

Access would be a key consideration in all land transfers. Parcels essential to assure public access to BLM-administered public lands would be retained.

**Wilderness**

Two of the six wilderness study areas (WSAs) would be recommended suitable for designation as wilderness. The Sand Butte and Raven's Eye WSAs contain 87,902 acres. The remaining four WSAs, containing 66,113 acres, would be managed under multiple use without special designation.

**Rationale**

Sand Butte and Raven's Eye WSAs provide for a diversity in potential wilderness areas within the desert ecosystem. They provide outstanding opportunities for dispersed and unconfined recreation in a desert setting. There are minimal conflicts with other resource uses. Both WSAs are manageable as wilderness, and both have high quality wilderness character. The location

## *Rationale for Selection of the Proposed RMP Fire Management*

of the WSAs adjacent to one another actually enhances the quality of wilderness character. A detailed discussion of the wilderness planning criteria and quality standards will be included in the final wilderness EIS prepared for Congress.

### Livestock Grazing and Range Improvements

The proposed RMP would retain 858,043 acres of public land in 68 grazing allotments with a proposed preference of 142,879 AUMs.

Nine new allotment management plans (AMPs) or cooperative resource management plans (CRMPs), covering areas not under an existing plan, would be prepared. This would bring the total area covered to 97 percent of the allotted areas. Although no changes in season of use are proposed, adjustments in season of use could be made based on future monitoring and consistent with regulations and policy. Sheep use would be allowed to be converted to cattle use in accordance with the Shoshone District Conversion Policy. Livestock grazing would not be allowed outside livestock grazing allotments unless specified by a specific plan.

The proposed RMP recognizes the need for additional brush control. Seeding would be done in areas where there is not an adequate native perennial seed source available. Additional range improvements, wells, pipelines, roads, and fences would be provided.

### Rationale

Livestock grazing on public land is an important economic resource for this region. It maintains most of the current livestock operations uninterrupted. Although conflicts between livestock grazing and other resource uses would occur, the proposed RMP would provide for multiple use while allowing livestock grazing. It would provide for soil protection, wildlife habitat, and the other resource uses. Range improvements would be designed to enhance, or to have few adverse impacts on the other resource uses.

### Fire Management

The proposed RMP would provide for additional road maintenance in priority areas to help suppression crews keep fires smaller. Prescribed fire may be used as a tool for accomplishing 19,000 acres of brush control. Though not planned at this time, prescribed fire could be used in other areas, but only

*Rationale for Selection of the Proposed RMP  
Fire Management*

if found to be environmentally acceptable through consideration of environmental effects in the NEPA process. Prescribed fire would not be used in the Substation Tract ACEC, Vineyard Creek ACEC, or Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs ACEC. In addition, fire prevention and suppression guidelines would be a component of many activity plans.

**Rationale**

The proposed RMP would help reduce the cost of fighting wildfires and reduce acres burned by providing additional access and fire breaks to use as control points. Road maintenance would be done in areas where it would be the most helpful in reducing the number and size of fires. Better fire management would benefit resources such as livestock grazing, wildlife habitat, and soil erosion. Other management practices to reduce wildfire size and occurrence could be considered in the future as availability and effectiveness are demonstrated. Use of prescribed fire would be prohibited on only a few small areas. Although no plans for prescribed fire use have been made for most of the planning area, the option to use prescribed fire in unforeseen circumstances would be preserved. The fire prevention and suppression guidelines contained in activity plans would benefit wildlife, soils, cultural resources, natural history resources, and wilderness resources.

**Soil Erosion**

There are potential severe erosion problems in a large portion of the planning area. The proposed RMP would limit uses which could cause accelerated erosion. It would limit agricultural development in the Lake Walcott area as well as ORV use to reduce potential erosion problems. Fire management actions to reduce the size of wildfires would help prevent soil erosion. One hundred fifty acres of active sand dunes would be stabilized through seeding and other areas would be treated, if feasible, as they are identified.

**Rationale**

The proposed RMP would limit future potential erosion by limiting the amount of agricultural development and ORV use on much of the severe erosion hazard areas. It would recognize the potential erosion problems and ensure that they are addressed in future actions. Although the overall erosion rate would increase somewhat from present levels, it would remain at an acceptable level.

## *Rationale for Selection of the Proposed RMP Minerals*

### Wildlife Habitat Management

The proposed RMP would enlarge the Isolated Tracts program for upland game bird habitat management. This would be enhanced by the transfer of some lands to the Bureau of Reclamation and subsequent management of approximately half of those acres for wildlife habitat. Riparian habitat along the Little Wood River and in other areas would be protected. HMPs would be prepared to guide management of 171,000 acres of pronghorn winter habitat, 60,000 acres of pronghorn summer habitat, and 67,000 acres of sage grouse habitat. Fire suppression guidelines for protection of brush in key areas would be developed. Habitat for sensitive, threatened and endangered, and candidate species would be protected.

### Rationale

The proposed RMP recognizes wildlife habitat as an important resource on the public lands. It would provide for improvement of critical winter pronghorn habitat, pronghorn summer habitat, and sage grouse habitat. There would be sufficient forage and habitat available to meet the goals of this alternative. Riparian areas would be considered of prime importance and be managed to maintain or enhance them. The Isolated Tracts program would be enlarged with the important tracts being maintained for wildlife habitat management. Sensitive and threatened or endangered species habitat would be protected. Most wildlife numbers would be expected to increase because of management of habitat under the proposed RMP, but transfer of public lands and conversion to intensive agriculture would result in small losses of pronghorn, mule deer, and non-game species.

### Minerals

The proposed RMP would maintain in public ownership and leave available to local and State government most of the mineral materials (e.g., cinders, sand, and gravel) found on public lands. Each deposit would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis prior to use. The areas of highest potential locatable mineral value, particularly along the Snake River near Lake Walcott, would be identified and retained for their mineral value. The proposed RMP would leave open for leasing all of the highest potential areas for oil, gas, and geothermal resources. The two WSAs recommended suitable would have significant restrictions on lease development if designated wilderness by Congress. Surface occupancy related to mineral lease development would be restricted on 7,669 acres.

*Rationale for Selection of the Proposed RMP  
Minerals*

**Rationale**

The recognized need for local and State government for mineral materials, particularly for road maintenance and construction, was given a high priority. Although use of these materials would be prohibited in the proposed Dry Cataracts National Natural Landmark, other areas would still be available. Mineral lease restrictions in the two WSAs recommended suitable would have a minor effect on minerals development given the low potential of the areas. Surface occupancy restrictions would be applied only on a few small areas, so the effect on mineral development would be minimal.

Lands for Local and State Governments and Other Needs

Local and State government and other needs would be met subject to the availability of the needed resource and potential conflicts with other uses. Each application would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

**Rationale**

Generally, local and State governments and other needs are localized, and projected needs are not well known. The proposed RMP recognizes these needs. The allowance would depend upon a "site-by-site" evaluation. Restrictions identified in management prescriptions for multiple use and transfer areas would apply.

Off-Road Vehicles (ORVs)

The proposed RMP would leave over 92 percent of the planning area open to ORVs (excluding the Great Rift WSA, see "Items Common to Alternatives" in Chapter 2 in the final EIS). There would be 90,103 acres (mainly WSAs recommended suitable) closed to ORV use and use would be limited on 2,680 acres.

**Rationale**

There are two areas of heavy ORV use, one near Twin Falls and the other near American Falls. ORV use is continuing to grow as the population grows.

## *Rationale for Selection of the Proposed RMP Cultural Resources*

Direct conflicts exist between ORVs and other resources, particularly soil erosion and cultural resources. The proposed RMP would restrict ORV use in areas of severe erosion hazard and cultural resources. This would protect these resources and allow ORV use to continue in areas with less potential for resource damage.

### Recreation

Recreation use of the planning area is steadily growing. Principle uses include hunting, fishing, ORV use, and sightseeing. The proposed RMP would recognize the importance of these recreational values. There are three Special Recreation Management Areas: Little Wood River, Cedar Fields, and Snake River Rim. Unique areas, including areas of geologic interest, the proposed Dry Cataracts National Natural Landmark, Box Canyon, and Vineyard Creek, would be protected.

### Rationale

The proposed RMP would allow continued growth in recreation use. Hunting would grow at a slower rate than projected for present management in Alternative A, but the growth rate would be only slightly lower. ORV use would decrease in some areas where it would be prohibited or limited, but overall the growth rate in ORV use would be only 1 percent less than the rate projected for present management in Alternative A. Other recreation activity growth rates would equal or exceed the rates projected for present management in Alternative A. Important natural history and scenic areas would be protected.

### Cultural Resources

Cultural resources would be protected in the proposed RMP with ORV use limited or prohibited in some high density cultural resource occurrence areas. Surface disturbance during fire suppression activities would be restricted in some areas to protect cultural resources. The Cultural Resources Standard Operating Procedures, presented in the preceeding section, would be applied to protect cultural resources.



*Rationale for Selection of the Proposed RMP  
Cultural Resources*

**Rationale**

The Bureau is required by law to protect the cultural resources on the public lands. The restrictions on ORV use and surface disturbance in areas of high density cultural resource occurrence would help protect cultural resources. The Standard Operating Procedures would help protect cultural resources throughout the planning area.

**Special Designations**

The proposed RMP would result in the designation of three Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs): Substation Tract, Vineyard Creek, and Box Canyon/Blueheart Spring. The total area involved would be 673 acres. A fourth identified potential ACEC, Silver Sage Playa, would not be designated.

**Rationale**

The Substation Tract contains an important natural system, a relict area of vegetation of the Snake River Plains. This tract has been studied by various groups to measure productive capability of several range sites found in this area. There are few, if any, comparable areas for research. This research is very valuable to the evaluation of the productivity of surrounding farmlands. Preserving the natural condition of the tract for research is supported by the Soil Conservation Service (Hugie 1959), the University of Idaho\*, and the Idaho Natural Area Coordinating Committee (Caicco and Wellner 1983). Designation of the Substation Tract ACEC would help ensure sustained management attention to the special values and needs of the area. Fire prevention and suppression would be given high priority. Other methods of protecting the values of the tract would be explored, such as cooperative agreements with adjacent landowners.

Vineyard Creek contains habitat for a unique hybrid trout population which spawns in the stream, and possible habitat for the Bliss Rapids snail, a candidate endangered species. The Vineyard Creek area contains features that illustrate the volcanic processes that formed the Snake River Plain, and the erosion processes of catastrophic floods left by the Bonneville Flood. Vineyard Creek is very scenic. The area is within the proposed Dry Cataracts area recommended for National Natural Landmark status by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service in 1979. The Idaho Natural Area

\*Personal communication from M. Hironaka, Professor, Department of Range Resources, University of Idaho, and M. A. Fosberg, Professor, Department of Plant, Soil, and Entomological Sciences, University of Idaho.

*Rationale for Selection of the Proposed RMP  
Special Designations*

Coordinating Committee recommended designation of a portion of the potential ACEC as a research natural area (Caicco, Rabe, and Wellner 1983). Designation of the Vineyard Creek ACEC would help ensure sustained management attention to the special values and needs of the area. The habitat of the hybrid trout is currently threatened by sedimentation from irrigation return flow from nearby farmland. The solution to this problem is not a simple matter of allowing or disallowing a given proposal, but will require a sustained, coordinated effort with adjacent landowners. The special attention afforded by ACEC designation would help ensure solution of the problem. Other values in the Vineyard Creek area would be protected by close examination of future resource uses and proposals to prevent degradation of scenic quality and naturalness. The area would receive full fire suppression.

Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs contains the largest populations of the Shoshone sculpin, a candidate endangered species, found on public land. The area may also contain populations of the Bliss Rapids snail, a candidate endangered species. Box Canyon is very scenic. The area contains one of the few remaining relatively undisturbed box canyon or alcove ecosystems in the Snake River Plain Aquifer area. The area was proposed as a potential natural landmark by Robert Jones of the University of Idaho in 1973. An evaluation for eligibility for National Natural Landmark status was conducted for the National Park Service in 1980 (Bowler 1980). Designation of the Box Canyon/Blueheart Springs ACEC would help ensure sustained management attention to the special values and needs of the area. Proposals have been made for development of the water resources in Box Canyon which could adversely affect the Shoshone sculpin and other values. Future proposals would be scrutinized to ensure the sculpin habitat would not be adversely affected or that adverse effects could be mitigated, and to prevent degradation of scenic quality and naturalness.

The Silver Sage Playa would not be designated an ACEC in the proposed RMP. It contains a fair condition vegetation community that is uncommon. Other examples of this vegetation community exist in this and other areas, however, and many are in as good or possibly better condition. Therefore, it is neither considered to be a significant or unique natural community nor is it considered to be of more than local significance.